5: Spitzel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

322 411 is taken, barked, and straightened by being passed rapidly a few times through a flame, and then bent over the knee or between the hands. It is shaved down to uniform thickness with an arecanut-cutter or arrow blade, and cut to suitable length, roughly gauged by holding it along the outstretched arm from the nearer nipple to the end of the middle finger, giving it an average measure of two and a half feet, or slightly less. An arrow belonging to the great bow I have mentioned, measured three and a half feet. The nock or notch is a quarter of an inch deep and cut square.

411 237 284 The arrow is feathered with the wing plumes of the owl, devil-bird, jungle-cock, or large crane (*mana koka*); the owl's, besides being the best, are easily picked up along dry stream beds, on the trees bordering which the birds usually roost. A feather is split unequally down the rachis, only the larger segment being used. Four such segments, about two inches long, are arranged equidistantly round the shaft, an inch and a quarter from the end, and bound neatly down with *aralu* fire, the mouth helping in the process. The first turns are merely taken round that part of the shaft, which is immediately below the feathers, then round the bared lower ends of the rachis, and then carried along, at spaced intervals, between the carefully separated barbs. Should a strand not prove long enough, it is finished off by having its end tucked in between rachis and shaft, and another is similarly begun. Finally the ruffled barbs are straightened out between the thumb and fingers moistened with saliva. A few turns of fibre just below the notch serve to give grip to the drawing fingers.

411 The arrow-head is made of flattened iron obtained from local blacksmiths. It is three to five inches long, of lanceolate shape in imitation of the *na* leaf, and sharp at the edges; serving as much as a cutting implement as an arrow. By a tang it is let into the end of the shaft to which it is firmly secured with fibre. All the strung parts of the arrow, [824] as well as the bow-string, are finally dressed with the sticky milk of *kiri-wel* to prevent untwisting. Both bow and arrow, being very liable to the ravages of boring insects, are always kept hung over the smoke when not in use.

The method of stringing the bow is by placing one end of it, to which the string is knotted, on the ground, and then pressing on its centre either with the bent knee or by a foot thrust. A correctly strung bow should measure at its centre a span between string and belly of bow; this is rather more than the "fist-mele" (clenched fist with thumb upright) the rough estimate of European stringing.

The arrow release favoured by the Veddas is that in which the cord is drawn with the first joints of the index and middle fingers, the arrow being usually placed on the left of the bow. The style of archery is often peculiar: the arrow fitted to the bow is raised head high; the right elbow is now swung up in an awkward flourish above the head, and then brought slowly down to alignment with the eye, as the string is drawn out to its fullest extent and the arrow delivered.

DANCING

177 535 The ceremonial dances of the Veddas have been minutely described and illustrated by Seligmann. The dance we are about to describe seems to have been performed before him in its greatest purity at Henebedde. The differences between his description and ours must be

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222 the hives are beyond the reach even of this: and then, though the honey itself may not be secured, the wax may, by being dislodged with long bamboos and collected at the foot of the hill; *iti bambara* (wax hives) such combs are called. There are others, so safe under prominent brows, that they are absolutely untakeable; *yakkini baliya* (she-demon's portion) is the name of them.

[417] When the rock is not too high, the ladder is made long enough to reach the ground, where it can be held slantwise close up against the face of the rock, bringing the gatherer within easier access of the hive. But where the hill is too lofty for this, as usually happens, the ladder hangs free, and the gatherer may even have to swing to and fro to enable him to get at the combs. Nor is this all; the *bambaras*, several of which may kill a man, have to be reckoned with; they can only be dispersed by heavy smoking; and, what is worse, when several hives are clustered together in a colony, the work has to be done on a pitch dark night.

Imagine then the picture of the man smothered in smoke, assailed by angry bees, swinging in the darkness two hundred feet or more above the stony earth, with neck and knee hitched to the ladder so as to leave the arms free to manipulate torch and prong. Is it a wonder that every Vedda is not a *kapunkaraya* or cutter, but only the boldest of them; and that he, when he descends to his work, does so without thought in his heart of life or father or mother?*

222 417 284 We will now describe the scene as it actually takes place:—On Panihela were five large combs the Veddas meant to have one night. That morning they assembled on the rock. Their first business was to collect the canes and vines that go to the making of the ladder (*yothala*). Two canes, some twenty or thirty feet long and about an inch in diameter, were cut, dragged to the top of the hill, and lined out. Knotting the end of one to a tree they split it in half. One man, standing at the end, held these apart; while two others stood in between, constructing strong rungs at intervals of two feet with *kiriwel* creepers, which they first looped round the two halves of the cane and then bound together with a running twist. A ladder of any length may thus be constructed; for, should a single cane not be long enough, its ends are looped and interlocked with similar loops in another length of split cane. The ladder is finished off by overlapping and binding together the free ends in the form of an U. This is the type of ladder employed in the perilous descents; where the drop is easier they do not go to all this trouble, but merely split the end of the cane for a yard or so and tie a stick across; standing on this the man is lowered.

372 222 The ladder having been completed, the *hullas* or torches and the *matha* or forked stake are yet to make. The torches, four of which are required, are designed to give a maximum of smoke, and are therefore constructed by enclosing dry *mana* grass, leaves and bark within a sheath of green leafy twigs. The *matha* or *masleya* is a stake six feet long, made of the light *velang* or *walumala*; it is pointed at one end and forked at the other by being split cross-wise into four pointed prongs which are kept apart by two pieces of stick wedged in cross-wise and tied. Both *matha* and *hulas* have long loose loops attached to them by which they are slung to the arms when not in use.

* "*Pana epa kiyath wala bahinoy; amma thatha epa kiyala.*"